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A

FEW HINTS

RELATIVE TO

Cutaneous Complaints.

By T. M. KELSON.

— — —

A NEW EDITION.

WITH SOME

REMARKS

ON THE

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

OF

THE SKIN.

— — —

By C. KELSON,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, &c.

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## P R E F A C E.

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*IN taking this mode of addressing the Public, I may probably incur that odium Medicum usually attached to persons professing to have superior practical skill ; more particularly when they shew a disposition to deviate from the common line of practice.*

*To pretend to be exclusively in possession of specific means of cure, and to withhold those means from the Profession, I must acknowledge, carries with it rather an air of Quackery: but I flatter myself, my immediate Medical and other Friends will give me credit for not having a particle of that sort of spirit in my composition ; and however questionable this publication may appear, I trust that my Professional character is sufficiently established to guard me against the imputation of attempting to further my practice otherwise than by liberal and honest means.*

T. M. K.

SEVENOAKS,

Sept. 1820.

## FEW HINTS,

Ec. Ec.

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I HAD long been in the habit of treating and managing Cutaneous complaints in a manner peculiar to myself, before I took any other than merely accidental means to make it known to the Public: nevertheless, my practice was extensive, and, I can say, uniformly successful, in all cases which I voluntarily undertook, and where my directions were observed and strictly pursued; as can be attested by numbers of the first Families in the kingdom. But since my former publication, so much has this particular part of my practice crowded upon me, that I should not be

doing myself or family justice were I any longer to resist the solicitation of numberless friends, and not to give up a portion of my time and attention exclusively to it: for that purpose, I have formed, in conjunction with my Son, an establishment in London, as the more ready means of giving greater publicity to my discoveries, and the Public a greater facility of availing themselves of them.

It has been by imperceptible degrees that I have been led to attend to all kinds of Cutaneous affections; but the complaint, by which my name first obtained some little celebrity, is that which is so frequently the torment of young people, usually termed a *pimpled face*.

Some systematic Writers have pointed out many varieties of this eruption: I know of none. What they describe as varieties, are only different stages of the disorder. Whether small-pox be in its earliest or latest stage, it is still small-pox, though its form may alter ever so much.

This eruption invariably begins to make

its appearance at the approach of puberty; and almost exclusively in young people of phlegmatic habits and languid circulation, with feeble powers of cutaneous excretion.

It is always confined to the face, neck, and back.

It is more frequent with young women; but generally more severe with young men. These persons, if not tormented with medicine, or torn to pieces by fretting, usually enjoy good health; it being merely a local and partial affection of the skin, not in the least interfering with the general animal economy. Should there be, at the same time, ever so much constitutional mischief existing in the habit, I will not allow this particular affection of the skin to be at all connected with it. Therefore, by removing the eruption, there can be no hazard of producing internal disorders. Indeed, were it otherwise, my mode of cure comes rather under the idea of extirpation, than repulsion.

Various are the supposed causes of this

disorder. Some attribute its origin to bile, indigestion, and other affections of the stomach and viscera ; to the sudden exposure to cold when heated, or drinking of cold things in that state, &c. All those ideas are certainly erroneous. The immediate and sole cause of the eruption, is the incapacity of the cutaneous system to throw off the grosser perspirable fluids which begin to be determined to the surface of the body at this particular period of life.

The approach of this worrying complaint may be first discovered from a slight discoloration of the follicles of the chin, nose, and forehead, giving a coarser appearance to the complexion. This discoloration arises from the concreted fluid being detained in the extremities of the pores, and exposed to the atmosphere, forming innumerable black specks. The mouth of the pore thus being completely filled up, the secretion still going on, a substance is collected, taking the shape of the duct, and forming, when squeezed out, a worm-like appearance. This deposit, after a certain time, gets into a morbid state, ex-

citing inflammation, tumor, and suppuration; or, perhaps, more frequently, this crisis is caused by distention.

In cold, phlegmatic habits, which, I before observed, were usually the subjects of this disorder, nature will submit to this impeded secretion for a length of time, and is only called into activity by the stimuli of strong exercise, drinking of too much wine, hot rooms, &c. Thus, to these stimulants to cutaneous circulation and secretion, the source and origin of the eruption have been attributed; when they are only exciting causes, by rousing an inactive habit, sufficiently to throw off this viscous humour, as it would any other extraneous substance.

Sometimes, even after inflammation has taken place, the tubercles will recede, and be removed by the absorbent system, without suppurating, as in the case of other threatened abscesses: but the more common and natural termination, is by suppuration.

It has also been observed, that this eruption

will sometimes disappear in illness, and return as health is restored. Therefore, confusing cause and effect, it has been thought, in certain constitutions, greatly to influence the general health, when it evidently can have no such power. Its disappearance is the effect, not the cause, of illness. It is the result of a new action, from the agency of another disease. When universal emaciation, from fever or other severe illness, takes place, frequently even the morbid collections of the body will be absorbed, and thrown out of the habit, as well as the more healthy.

Perchance, this accidental indisposition may take place during the time that topical remedies are using. The application will then be the supposed cause of illness, and thus the practice will be brought into disrepute.

This false reasoning I am most anxious to rectify. Of nothing in my profession am I more confident, than I am of the independence of this complaint to the general constitution. Those impressions and principles have ever influenced my practice. Merely by

local and topical remedies, without a particle of medicine, have I eradicated this eruption, in numberless cases; and in no instance has the least mischief to the constitution ensued.

The disgusting appearance of this eruption, in its aggravated forms, might be, to many, a sufficient inducement to hazard much in its removal; but if I apprehended there could be the least risk of sacrificing health by it, the Public would not have been troubled with this publication.

I wish to separate from the complaint I have been treating of—though others have classed it under the same head—that red and unequal appearance of the surface of the nose, and other parts of the face, which takes place later in life; not always, but frequently, the consequence of hard living. Though somewhat similar in its appearance, it is essentially different: the one is an impediment in the excretory ducts; the other is a disease caused by inflammatory adhesion and thickening of the surrounding parts, and is much more

obstinate of cure. When it is the result of inebriety, it cannot be removed but by a change of system; and that, if it have been long established, will not always succeed.

Some young persons, also, will have flushed faces with pimples, and a degree of inequality in the skin, from causes differing totally from those producing the pimpled face, which has been usually termed *acne*: to those unfortunate persons I can likewise promise great relief; and the removal of it altogether I have frequently accomplished.

Red spots from varicose and radiated vessels will arise frequently in different parts of the face: those, when distinct, are to be destroyed with little difficulty. But this disposition will sometimes, in the decline of life, extend over a large surface; and when in the cheeks, will produce a colour, appearing, at a distance, not unpleasant, but, if closely examined, may be discovered to be the consequence of enlarged cutaneous vessels spreading in all directions; which, if not checked, will extend to the nose, and terminate in the worst kind

of flushed face. This derangement of skin comes also within my means of cure, provided it have not its origin in too good living.

The purport of this publication being solely to make myself more generally known to the Public as a practical man, and not to assume the character of an elaborate author or a theorist, I shall only further notice, and that generally, (having ever held nice classification as trifling,) those chronic affections of the skin which terminate in scurfy and scabby incrustations, bearing the technical name of *psora*, or *psoriasis*, but vulgarly called *scorbutic*. If they be confined to the scalp, they are usually termed a *scald head*: in that shape the disease is most common.

The same disposition will not unfrequently extend to the body and extremities, spreading most rapidly over larger surfaces, causing almost insupportable itching and irritation.

Children, from their earliest infancy, are liable to this disease, under the name of *milk*

*crust*, or a supposed affection from teething: in puberty, it is frequently lost.

It occurs more generally in the spring and autumn; but seasons do not always govern.

A person in perfect health is attacked with this complaint, and no illness is produced by the effort of throwing it off: but great inconveniences will frequently arise, if the vitiated fluid be permitted to concrete, and remain too long on the surface; getting into a morbid state, and then received back into the habit through the absorbent system, causing swelled glands, abscesses, and other ailments. No cutaneous affection is so common in this climate as the above, nor any which leads to greater discomforts: to enumerate the various forms it takes would far exceed the limits of this little pamphlet: but I have no hesitation in saying, in its agency are included all the varieties of *lepra*, and that the same class of remedies are applicable in all its forms, and equally efficacious.

In this, and other pustular diseases which

terminate in scabbing, I depend, as in the preceding complaints, very little on internal remedies. In debilitated habits I have recourse to such medicines as are usually given to invigorate the constitution and restore general health ; but the eruption itself, though it be ever so extensive, will always yield to external applications, if rightly and judiciously applied.

The more formidable and obstinate of cure is that affection of the scalp which is usually termed the *ring-worm*. It occurs generally in young subjects, and is of a very contagious nature. When it has been of long standing, it is a most tiresome disease. I have had more trouble in removing it, than any other affection of the skin. In recent cases, I never found any difficulty.

There are also certain chronic vesicular eruptions of the erysipelatous kind, which also terminate in a sort of scurf or scabbing, which belong to the same defective constitution of skin. These will sometimes spread with much acrimony, and run on to a great

length of time, the eruption being successive ; one set of vesicles drying off, others immediately forming in the adjoining parts, and terminating in a similar manner. This disorder, like the former, is not to be managed by medicine ; but to be treated, as is my custom with every other cutaneous affection, wholly as a business of surgery.

I have now finally to declare it to be my firm conviction, that no *chronic* cutaneous eruption need ever be assailed through the constitution, or that it depends on any other failure in the habit than a defect of the cutaneous functions. By this, I do not mean to affirm that many of the lesser and accidental affections of the skin, the consequence of improper food, &c. may not be avoided by the due regulation of diet ; or that, when they have been incurred, they may not be mitigated, and even repressed, by certain remedies, which may act as a relief to the cutaneous functions, and thus become a negative remedy ;—and, of course, I do not mean to include any eruptions produced by infection or contagion. My precepts and doctrines

apply only to those habitual disorders which are the consequence of a constitutionally weak and defective skin, inadequate to the discharge of the ordinary unassimilated fluids naturally determined to the surface of the body; and my usual remedies are meant solely to repair and invigorate the faulty and imperfect state of that organ.

If, hereafter, it should appear that I have contributed, by my practice, to elucidate and simplify the treatment of eruptive complaints, the merit will rest solely on my endeavours to remove it somewhat from the intricate province of the Physician, to the more simple department of the Surgeon.



SOME  
REMARKS  
ON THE  
FORMATION AND FUNCTIONS  
OF  
THE SKIN.



By C. KELSON.

## PREFACE.

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*TO establish new opinions regarding the structure and functions of the skin, and to prevail on the Profession to countenance a mode of treatment contrary to all former practice, for the removal of diseases incidental to it, I am aware may be an arduous and difficult task to accomplish. In making the attempt, I have not only to cope with the prejudices of ages, but so much are my notions at variance with the general opinions of the day, that I am also running the hazard of exciting the animadversions of some of our most able modern Physiologists: but if, by directing my attention to these inquiries, I have been able to rectify any errors which I, or others, may have heretofore imbibed; or should I be the means of exciting a spirit of inquiry upon a subject so intricate, and hitherto so slightly investigated; I trust my feeble efforts will not be disregarded as useless, nor altogether uninteresting to the Profession or the Public.*

C. KELSON,

## REMARKS,

Ec. Ec.

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**I**N the study of the animal economy, the Skin has not generally received so much consideration as its importance in the system requires. Its organization has not been sufficiently examined, and its functions but little understood; although they certainly are of the most essential kind, and their agency as extensive as most in the animal frame. Of late years, some skilful and scientific Practitioners have entered upon the subject with considerable ability; and as far as regards the arrangement, and classification, of Cutaneous Disorders, much has been accomplished by them: but in the removal of such complaints, their efforts have been feeble, and attended with little or no success. They have been influenced and governed by notions which have

been transmitted to them from the darkest ages of physic. They have scarcely advanced a single step beyond their ancient teachers, whose minds were poisoned with humoral pathology; who were very imperfectly acquainted even with the outlines of human anatomy; ignorant of the circulation of the blood and of the nature of the absorbents; still more so of chemical combinations and actions; regarding the skin as merely a simple and outward garment, and totally unsuspicious of the important duties attached to it. Under all these disadvantages, no wonder they should have been defective in their theories, and erroneous in their practice; but it is surprising that, in more enlightened times, their notions and opinions should have been so implicitly adopted, and so silently acquiesced in.

These are bold remarks, and would appear very presumptuous in so young a Practitioner, were I not to acknowledge, that for most of my ideas, and the general ground-work of my doctrine, I am indebted to my Father's tuition, his long-tried experience, and most successful

practice. I have heard him uniformly express himself much dissatisfied with the generally-received opinions as to the nature and faculties of the follicles of the skin, and the formation of the cuticle; and though, in speaking and writing, he may have mentioned sebaceous glands, he never thought they were employed in the manner generally imputed to them. I am persuaded, that sebaceous glands, for the purpose of perspiration, never yet existed, but in the imagination of those Professors who have taught such opinions; and I am equally convinced, that the cuticle is not formed in the way they are wont to teach. Whoever yet saw a sebaceous gland, but in particular parts where a different fluid is secreted? I allude to those about the mouth, under the arms, &c. which ought to have names more expressive of their nature and functions. Perspiration, the regular and natural cutaneous discharge, is poured out, in my opinion, from vascular extremities, and not secreted by sebaceous glands. I conceive it to be a most important and necessary excretion, not merely for the purpose of lubrication, but, like most others in the system, to guard against an over-accumulation of unassimilated

fluids. In the natural and slow course of circulation, only a small portion of the contents of such vessels is driven to their extremities and expelled on the surface; the greater part passing laterally into the congeries of vessels forming the cutis, in which I believe the process of assimilation of the blood principally takes place; producing an alteration somewhat analogous to that which is brought about in the lungs, and on which the support and existence of the whole system greatly depends; so essential to animal support, that if any large proportion of it be rendered incapable of performing its functions, disease, or even death, may ensue; as is daily exemplified in burns, small-pox, &c. You may, as is the case with the bark of trees, actually destroy or remove a large proportion—provided what remains be healthy—and life will not be materially interrupted; but if a large part be diseased, the system will be at least ill supported, and greatly deranged, by this inability in the skin to perform its functions. I am further confirmed in thinking that the follicles of the skin are the extremities of arteries, and that they pour out the perspirable fluid as it im-

mediately flows from the general circulation, before it be diffused through the plexus or congeries of vessels forming the cutis, from the immediate effect that exercise and all other cutaneous excitements produce, and which so greatly increase its quantity. This would not be the consequence, if it first entered those minute, ramifying, and anastomosing vessels of which the cutis is made up; or from glandular process, provided such glands were in existence. These excretory vessels, I apprehend, keep their arterial power till they enter the cutis, when they begin to partake more of the nature of veins, emitting, from the propelling force behind them, their contents upon the surface of the body, (excepting, as I before observed, what by lateral communication escapes into the cutis for assimilation;) and there, with all the other fluids immediately transmitted, after having undergone a certain filtration, are returned into the habit, and circulated over again and again, till the useless part is expelled by some excretion or other. That perspiration comes immediately from what I call the primary circulation, and consists only of the thinner parts of the blood, which are

all that are usually admitted into the capillary extremity of an artery, is still further exemplified by the sudden reduction of the habit from profuse sweating, and the urgent call which is immediately made for a supply of liquid nourishment. I have also more than once witnessed, in the last stage of consumption, from an extreme dissolved state of the blood, that the perspiration has been so coloured as to stain the sheets; clearly evincing the discharge of a certain portion of the red globules.

None of the above remarks will apply to the more slow and guarded operations of the glandular system: besides, it may be laid down as a fact, with very few exceptions, that there are no cuticular glands but those which absorb, receive, and return extravasated fluids into the system, instead of expelling them.

In all constitutions, the skin occasionally is called upon for more exertion than is natural: probably sometimes, from an imperfect chyli-faction, certain fluids are determined to it which should have been discharged from some

other part of the system; and though this constitution of the skin might have been equal to the management of its ordinary duties, it fails under this additional burthen; the pores become irritated and inflamed by it, the exuded fluid is of a thinner and harsher nature, the circulation in the coats of the follicles is obstructed, vesication and abrasion of the extremities will ensue; and thus the pores ill performing their duty, and an unnatural exudation also taking place from those minute vessels so lacerated and laid bare by the above excitement, a mixed and distempered discharge is formed, and runs more immediately into scabbing; and, if neglected, will, from its being open to the action of the absorbents, be received back into the habit, after undergoing a morbid change, causing an enlargement of the glands, hectic fever, and all the long train of scrofulous symptoms so common among us, as well as the other lesser and intermediate disorders which daily present themselves to our notice.

The cuticle I believe to be an expansion and continuation of the vessels constituting

the sides of the follicles of the cutis, intermixing and anastomosing with each other, and slightly united to the cutis by lateral vessels.—There can be no reason for making the functions or structure of a part intricate and obscure, when a simple idea will more easily explain its phænomena.

Recurring to my former subject, — Why should sebaceous glands, which have never been demonstrated or discovered, be supposed to exist for the purpose of secreting perspiration? Is there not less of conceit in imagining this fluid to be immediately issuing from the extremities of vessels? Can there be any well-grounded objection or contradiction to such a principle? Let this mode of reasoning be applied to the cuticle. Is it not much easier to suppose that the cuticle is formed from the vascular extremities of the pores, than to imagine it to be transmitted from below, in a manner nobody knows how? or is it more difficult to conclude that the sides of a pore, at its extremity, should be expanded and extended, meeting and anastomosing with the vascular extremities of other pores, to

form a general covering to the cutis to which it is slightly attached by occasional minute lateral vessels both before and after its expansion, than it is to conceive that the inner surface of the ear, nose, or any other opening, should be continued to the neighbouring parts, varying in its external appearance only as the different form and texture of the cutis is shewn underneath? Is it more reasonable to fancy that the cuticle dips into the pores, than it is to suppose it transmitted from them? What possible termination can those vascular coats have, if they be not thus disposed of? Every one must allow that the coats of the smallest vessels, as well as all other organized parts, have a circulatory system, even to their minutest points. It is not because they are diminutive, and because circulation, according to our defective conceptions, thereby becomes intricate and difficult to be understood, that we are to suppose it not to exist. How much more strongly will that perplexity apply to the lesser orders of animated nature? Can we suppose that a more imperfect circulation is carried on in the wing of a fly than in the arm of a human creature? or that a mite has not

a circulatory system as well as a fly? — The loss or disease of cuticle, as it applies to the general habit, is but of little consequence, when compared to the deeper affection of the skin : it is meant rather as a protection and security to the cutis, than essential to the constitutional offices performed by it. If the cuticle suffer from external causes, it annoys but little, and is soon repaired ; and when it participates in the disordered state of the cutis, it is usually re-established with it : therefore to take it into distinct consideration is seldom necessary.

Upon this plain and simple view, as regards the physiology and pathology of the Skin, (setting aside all humoral hypothesis,) has my doctrine been built, and my practice regulated ; regarding the faculties of the skin as properly ministerial and subservient to the constitution only when in a healthy state ; feeling nothing necessary but, by local and undivided means, to restore to a state of health and vigour (when weakened by disease) what may be called almost a vital organ ; regardless of all

the prejudices which have so long bewildered the Profession, and which have so much harassed the minds of individuals suffering under disorders that have been supposed to be flowing from, and inherent in, their constitutions, and not admitting of a remedy; who have only been consoled under their maladies by being taught to believe that all *were* for their good, and that greater evils were avoided by their existence.

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